

Exhibit No. 412Date 3-22-11Bill No. HB 230

Date: March 22, 2011

To: Montana Senate Finance and Claims Committee

Fr: Shantelle Gaynor, Missoula County Office of Planning and Grants and Crime Victim Advocate Program

Re: Impact of the HB 230 on local victim services programs

Dear Mr. Chairman Senator Lewis and Members of the Senate Finance and Claims Committee

On behalf of the Missoula County Office of Planning and Grants and the Crime Victim Advocate Program, we thank you for the opportunity to address the critical issue of HB 230. We have significant concerns about the ramifications of this bill and are asking you to oppose it. Specifically:

- The Montana Board of Crime Control has been a key partner in serving victims of crime in Missoula County as well as providing support and technical assistance in the development of our coordinated community response to domestic and sexual violence through the criminal justice system. The Board of Crime Control has expertise in the areas of crime prevention and victim services. We think that over time, as staff turns over, moving the Board under the Department of Corrections will dilute their effectiveness and the Department of Corrections expertise lies in working with offenders, incarceration, treatment, etc. In fact, in 2010 the Department of Corrections one main link to victims – the Crime Victims Advisory Council – was disbanded in a previous round of budget cuts. The Montana Board of Crime Control provides tremendous service to local programs that requires a fundamental knowledge of victims needs and crime prevention strategies.
- We are concerned that critical grant funds will be interrupted, as the Board has to decertify and recertify all of the federal grant funds that support this work. As a federal grantee as well, we have first hand experience in addressing budget issues. Our very simple questions often take a month to resolve.
- Grant funds administered by the Montana Board of Crime Control fund critical crime victim services including advocacy in domestic and sexual violence cases. Our criminal advocacy fulfills the federal victim notification requirements for Missoula County. Without funds to support our staff we may be forced to lay off up to 3 full and part-time employees. As a result we will be out of compliance with federal requirements.
- Ultimately victims of domestic and sexual violence will suffer the biggest consequences if staff is laid off. Our criminal advocates have an open caseload of 400 cases ranging from simple assault to homicide. In 2010 the Crime Victim Advocate program served over 950 unduplicated victims of crime. In the case of homicide there can be over 20 family members who are all seeking information about the case as it moves through the often confusing and frustrating court system. If there is an interruption in funding we will be unable to serve their critical needs.

HB 230 seeks to save money by cutting administrative costs. In reality there is a very real risk that the cost savings will be on the backs of victims of crime not receiving critical services, a loss of jobs and a reduction in the quality of service to local programs. This is not “cost savings” is will hurt our local communities. Please vote “no” on HB 230.

Thank you,

Shantelle Gaynor

Missoula Office of Planning and Grants and the Crime Victim Advocate Program